

## Information about Social Work Services

*If your child is referred for school-based counseling, the very word “counseling” may make it sound like a mysterious process. It isn’t! Counseling is a relationship built on confidentiality and trust—student trust, parent trust, teacher trust. Adequate information is the foundation of trust—all involved must have information about limits and processes of counseling. The following information describes the overall process of counseling.*

**How students are “selected” for counseling:** Students may be referred to the school social worker for individual and/or small group counseling by their parents or guardians, school faculty and staff, a concerned friend, or themselves. When a referral is received, the social worker meets with the student to determine the next steps.

**Who provides the counseling?** School-based counseling is provided by a state certified Licensed Social Worker (LMSW or LCSW). The social worker also has a certificate in School Social Work through the State Education Department of New York.

**Counseling for your child is voluntary.** It is your choice to consent or to decline school-based counseling for your child.

**What counseling for your child will involve:** Counseling may include small group (only available at elementary and middle school level) or individual sessions. During the sessions, your child and I will work together to help him or her understand the problem, the present and future consequences, develop goals for change, and a plan of action for change. A variety of activities will be used, e.g., writing, role-play, art, focused discussions.

**Sharing of information:** Trust is the basis for effective counseling. The ethical guidelines of the National Association of Social Work emphasize the importance of confidentiality between social workers and clients at the same time recognizing the rights of legal guardians. As a parent or guardian, you must trust that I will take good care of one of your most prized possessions. Your child must know and trust that, what is shared with me will stay with me unless he or she gives me permission to share information or if I suspect child abuse, if he or she is in danger of hurting himself or herself or poses a danger to others.

**Confidentiality:** Trust and confidentiality work together. Social work records do not become a part of the student’s permanent record except as required by school policy. We may indicate that a student was seen by the school social worker; however, the topics discussed are not included unless required by the school board policy. The requirements of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) are enforced—information will not be released to anyone outside our school without your written permission. I may talk with the classroom teacher about how he or she can help your child in the classroom; however, specific information will not be shared.

**Possible outcomes:** Through school-based counseling, your child may be taught strategies to help him or her make more effective and healthier decisions, increase the ability to set and reach goals, build better relationships with others, and be more successful in school and the community. We all must realize that changes take time; his or her problem did not develop overnight nor will it disappear overnight. Counseling will be successful when students, social workers, teachers, and family members work together as partners.

**Cost:** There is no cost to you for any of the counseling your child receives as part of our social work program.

**Please contact the School Social Worker if you want more information or have ideas about how we can better help your child.**